

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 12466

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PARM, US, UR

SUBJECT: USA INSTITUTE ON PUBLISHED SOVIET DEFENSE EXPENDITURES

REF: (A) MOSCOW 12375 (B) USDAO MOSCOW IR NO. 6901069076,
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1. SUMMARY. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF AUGUST 4, GEORGIY SVYATOV OF USA INSTITUTE CLAIMED THAT SOVIET SECRECY ON DEFENSE EXPENDITURES DUE TO HISTORICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL PROBLEMS AND ECONOMIC INFERIORITY OF USSR VIS-A-VIS USA. HE ALSO SAID CONFLICTING GROUPS WITHIN GOVERNMENT AND PARTY PREVENTS MORE INFORMATION FROM BEING PUBLISHED. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF TOOK OCCASION OF AUGUST 4 CALL ON GEORGIY SVYATOV, CHIEF OF THE USA INSTITUTE'S MILITARY-TECHNICAL POLICY SECTION, TO DISCUSS MORNING PRAVDA ARTICLE ABOUT COMPARATIVE U.S.-SOVIET DEFENSE EXPENDITURES. ARTICLE (REPORTED REFTELS) ACCUSED US. OF DELIBERATELY USING USING FALSE FIGURES AND INCORRECT METHODS IN ANALYSIS OF USSR DEFENSE OUTLAYS. EMBOFF TOOK LINE THAT SOVIET SECRECY IS TO BLAME FOR ANY INCORRECTNESS IN
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FIGURES THE U.S. ANALYSTS MAY USE. IF THE RUSSIANS WERE

NOT SO SECRETIVE, MISTAKES COULD BE AVOIDED.

3. AT FIRST, SVYATOV WAS DEFENSIVE AND, FOLLOWING LINE TAKEN IN PRAVDA ARTICLE, ARGUED THAT HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES OF RUSSIA AND HER DIFFICULT GEOPOLITICAL POSITION BETWEEN NATO AND CHINA) WERE THE REASONS FOR THE SECRECY. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE WERE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ALSO. THE U.S. WAS WILLING TO PUBLISH FIGURES BECAUSE IT WAS "NUMBER ONE" AND NEED NOT BE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT FIGURES OTHERS MIGHT RELEASE ON THEIR EXPENDITURES. THE SOVIET UNION COULD NOT BE SO FREE WITH STATISTICS. YOU (THE U.S.), HE SAID, WOULD NOT PUBLISH FIGURES IF YOUR GNP WERE HALF OF OF THE SOVIET GNP.

4. YURIY KATASONOV, A SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW AT THE INSTITUTE, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE CONVERSATION, BROKE IN WITH A MORE POSITIVE DEFENSE AT THIS POINT AND ARGUED THAT THE USSR DOES GIVE PLENTY OF INFORMATION ON ITS DEFENSE EFFORT. THERE ARE BITS AND PIECES OF INFORMATION IN THE SOVIET PRESS, BUT "YOU MUST READ IT CAREFULLY," HE SAID, BESIDES THAT, THE U.S. INFORMATION IS "PURE PROPAGANDA." WE FIND DELIBERATE MISINFORMATION IN THE U.S. FIGURES ALL THE TIME, HE SAID. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT RIGHT OR WRONG, THE FIGURES WERE GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE SOVIETS TO QUOTE THEM BACK TO US WHENEVER IT SERVED THEIR PURPOSES. KATASONOV ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SOME OF THE U.S. FIGURES WERE ACCURATE, BUT CLAIMED DELIBERATE FALSIFICATION WAS COMMON.

5. IN FENCING ABOUT SVYATOV'S POINT THAT ECONOMIC INFERIORITY WAS A CAUSE FOR SECRECY ON DEFENSE EXPENDITURES, HE SAID THAT THERE WERE "TWO GROUPS" IN THE SOVIET UNION. ONE WISHED TO SHOW THAT THE USSR WAS EQUAL TO THE U.S. IN ALL THINGS, EVEN DEFENSE EXPENDITURES, AND THE SECOND GROUP WISHED TO SEE PUBLISHED DEFENSE EXPENDITURES SHOWING THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS NOT SPENDING AS MUCH. THESE TWO GROUPS COULD NOT AGREE, AND THIS IS WHY SO LITTLE WAS PUBLISHED. SVYATOV CLAIMED THAT THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THESE "TWO GROUPS" COULD BE SEEN IN "OUR PARADES" WHEN SOMETIMES MUCH MILITARY EQUIPMENT WAS SHOWN AND SOMETIMES CONFIDENTIAL

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LITTLE.

6. EMBOFF ASKED WHERE THESE TWO GROUPS WERE; WERE THEY IN THE PARTY OR THE GOVERNMENT? SVYATOV SAID BOTH PARTY AND GOVERNMENT HAD REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH "GROUP." EMBOFF RESPONDED THAT IT APPEARED THAT THE GROUP WHICH USUALLY WON OUT WAS A THIRD ONE WHICH WISHED TO SEE NOTHING PUBLISHED.

7. COMMENT. WHILE SVYATOV WAS ON THE DEFENSIVE, HE WAS ALSO UNWILLING TO FOLLOW KATASONOV'S PREFERRED LINE THAT THE U.S. WAS AS BAD IF NOT WORSE THAN THE SOVIETS IN PUBLISHING DEFENSE FIGURES. SVYATOV'S BASIC POINT BEHIND THE ECONOMIC INFERIORITY AND THE "TWO GROUPS" ARGUMENTS APPEARED TO BE THAT THE SOVIETS WERE AFRAID THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED A SUPER-POWER IN A PAR WITH THE U.S. IF THEY LET THE TRUTH BE KNOWN. ADDITIONALLY, HE SEEMED TO THINK (ALTHOUGH HE REFUSED TO SAY SO OPENLY) THAT THE PERCENTAGE OF GNP (OR ITS SOVIET EQUIVALENT) DEVOTED TO DEFENSE WAS SO HIGH THAT THE USSR WOULD APPEAR IN A BAD LIGHT IF THIS BECAME KNOWN. STOESEEL

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